

INTERVIEW WITH MARGARET RUDE
JUNE 15, 2003 BY DOROTHE NORTON

MRS. NORTON: Good morning Marge. I am quite happy that you have this time to give to me so that we can do this taped interview. The tape goes in to the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia where it is transcribed and then the printed matter along with your photograph will go into the Archives. The purpose of this is that the Fish and Wildlife Service feels it's very valuable resource. That's why they established this committee; so that they could tap this resource. Good, career employees who have spent any time with FWS are usually pretty fine people. So thank you for the time. We'll start out asking you some personal questions like your birthplace and date.

MS. RUDE: My birthplace is Minneapolis, Minnesota and I was born on February 24, 1930.

MS. NORTON: What were your parent's names?

MR. RUDE: My mother's name was Catherine Herman. My father's name was Steve Lazor.

MS. NORTON: What were their jobs and education?

MS. RUDE: Education wise, they were both born in Czechoslovakia and immigrated to this country. My father was sixteen years old when he came to America. I am not sure how old my mother was. I don't know how much education they had. It was very little, in fact.

MS. NORTON: What were their jobs?

MS. RUDE: My mother actually was a homemaker. My father started out working for Wabash Screen Door Company. Of course they made every low wages, and finally a friend of theirs got my father a job with the Milwaukee Railroad. He ended up retiring from the Milwaukee Railroad.

MS. NORTON: Where did you spend your early years? Was it all in Minneapolis?

MS. RUDE: All in Minneapolis.

MS. NORTON: How did you spend your early years? What did you do?

MS. RUDE: I played. We had to television. There was radio, but no television. It was mostly just play. There were a lot of children in our neighborhood who were the same age as we were. We just had a lot of fun.

MR. NORTON: Did you have any hobbies, or books or events at school that you were impressed with?

MS. RUDE: Not really. It was probably because we were in a very, very poor neighborhood. I did not realize how poor we were until much later in years. So we had very little. We had to use our minds for anything we did as far as games and play. We were very, extremely poor, and how my mother managed to feed us; I was the oldest of ten children. How my mother managed to feed us and have something left. People would come over all of the time to my mother's house to eat. I don't know she did it. I really don't know how. It was like the loaves and the fishes you know! I always said, my mother could have been Jesus Christ as far as I was concerned.

MS. NORTON: Did you have any jobs before you graduated from High School?

MS. RUDE: Yes, I did. I worked in Fairview Hospital in the kitchen and interestingly enough, my next younger sister got a job there first. Maryanne was bigger than I was and we figured that she would be able to get a job better because of her size. So anyway, all through High School I worked in the kitchen at Fairview Hospital. That was the only place I worked before I graduated from High School.

MS. NORTON: What High School did you graduate from?

MS. RUDE: South High School in Minneapolis.

MS. NORTON: What year?

MS. RUDE: 1948.

MS. NORTON: Did you go to college?

MS. RUDE: No, we did not have the money. At that time, well actually, I ended up going to Indiana for my cousin's wedding. They talked me in to staying out in Indiana. After the wedding, I didn't come back home again for two years. I worked for a trucking company out in Indiana. I lived very, very close to the University but I knew nothing about getting a student loan and all of these wonderful things. Maybe they had it then, maybe they didn't; I don't know. Right now I know that there's all sorts of ways that you can go to college. It's a shame that I didn't because I was so close. I lived where now, part of the campus is. So you know how close I was; just across the river from the University of Minnesota. So it is a shame that I really didn't go to college.

MS. NORTON: You were never in the military services were you?

MS. RUDE: No.

MS. NORTON: Can you tell me where and when and how you met your husband?

MS. RUDE: Oh wow, I met my husband in a bar! I had worked for a bingo party that night. The fellow who was overseeing everyone who was working said, "Let's go have a drink". So we did. At the bar is where I met Roger. And that night there was a restaurant that caught fire across the street from where the bar was. That's actually how we got to talking because we were watching this horrible fire at the Blue Goose Café. We started dating and dated for several years.

MS. NORTON: When did you get married?

MS. RUDE: We got married in 1956.

MS. NORTON: Where?

MR. RUDE: Right here in Minneapolis. And Roger, I wanted to get married earlier, but he wanted to finish college first. He went to college on the GI bill. He graduated on June 9th and we were married on June 23rd. Of course we planned it a year ahead of time because otherwise we wouldn't have been able to get a hall for the reception and all of that.

MS. NORTON: How many children do you have?

MR. RUDE: Four.

MS. NORTON: Tell me their names and what they are doing now.

MS. RUDE: Steve is our oldest. He's a draftsman. He lives in Revere, Massachusetts which is a suburb of Boston. He has two young boys. Our next son is Dave; he lives in Inver Grove Heights. He's the one that works at the printing company. Our next son is Tony. Tony works for IBM and the electric company. Somehow, the two of them are connected in what he is doing. He wants to move to Florida. He is tired of our winters. That's where he is right now in fact. They went for a weekend to Florida. Then our next child is Nancy who lives in River Falls, Wisconsin on a ranch. She always wanted a horse, which we could not afford. We told her that she had to find a prince who could give her all of the horses she ever wanted. So she found him! They stood up in a wedding together and ended up dating and fall in love and getting married. Our biggest

thrill at the moment is that they have adopted two children; Gregory is from Russia and Jessica is from China. They adopted these two babies last year. They are two months apart and they aren't even two years old yet, so it's like having twins.

MS. NORTON: Oh, that will be fun. And you will be the Grandma that will do everything you can for them.

MS. RUDE: I go every Wednesday to help her with the babies.

MS. NORTON: So you didn't come to the FW Service until a little later in your working life? Was there any special reason why you wanted to work for the Service, or was that the only opening you could find?

MS. RUDE: Here is how I got involved with the Service: We purchased land in Wisconsin. And we were going to start building a cabin. A log cabin it ended up being. Someone had to help pay for it. I looked in the newspaper to see where I could get a job. I ended up getting a job at AAA, which paid peanuts, but it was a job. I worked there for six months and I had a niece who was working with the government. I said, "Joan, I never see anything in the paper about jobs with the government, how come?" She said that it was because they don't advertise in the paper. "You have to go to Personnel, and they have a room where they list all of the jobs." So she kind of steered me in the right direction. I went over to the Personnel Office at the Federal Building and looked at the jobs that they had available. There happened to be this opening at the FWS. I made an appointment to have an interview. Jerry Schatzkle is the one who interviewed me for the job. I was very impressed with what I saw at the FWS. Dorothe, I knew nothing about FWS before I went for that interview. So as a result, I went back to work. I had different kinds of hours. I worked from noon until six at the AAA office, so I was able to go on interviews for another job. I went to work at the AAA office. Jerry told me that they had some other people to interview and we'll call you. He finally called me and said "We'd like to have you come to work for us." So I gave my notice at the AAA. And they said, "Marge, you're too good! We can't lose you! We need you!" Well of course, I was older than anybody else that ever worked at the AAA office and they could depend on me. I didn't have young ones at home or anything like that. My boss tried her darnedest to try to get me to stay at the AAA office. I said, "No". I was making four dollars an hour at the time. And she tried to get a raise to five dollars an hour for me. I said that it still wasn't enough. It was a dollar an hour more, but it still wasn't enough compared to what I was going to be making. I can't even remember. I wasn't going on an hourly basis it was so much per year. Oh they were just devastated that I wouldn't stay there. But I said I was sorry and that I had to make the move. I said, "I have to do it now because there's a position that's open and I am able to go in." That's how I got the job.

MS. NORTON: Did you have to take a Civil Service exam?

MS. RUDE: Oh yeah. I sure did.

MS. NORTON: Did they give those right at Fort Snelling?

MS. RUDE: Oh yeah. There were certain days when the tests were given so I was able to go in. Obviously, I must have done very well. I was forever grateful to Jerry Schatzkle.

MR. NORTON: So when did you start?

MS. RUDE: That's a funny story. My first day at the FWS was October 11th, which was Columbus Day.

MS. NORTON: What year?

MS. RUDE: 1957. No, it was 1987. We laughed all of the time that my first day was a paid holiday. I didn't have to go to work on Monday. My first real day was actually October 12th. We really laughed about that.

MS. NORTON: What position were you in when you started?

MS. RUDE: I think they called it Clerk Typist.

MS. NORTON: What division?

MS. RUDE: Refuges.

MS. NORTON: Where did you go from there?

MS. RUDE: From Refuges, I transferred to Personnel and from there I went to Ecological Services. That's where I retired from was Ecological Services.

MS. NORTON: Did you have promotion opportunities when you went to these different divisions?

MS. RUDE: Only when I went to Ecological Services. When I went to Personnel it was a lateral move. Actually, to tell you the truth Dorothe, I always thought it was really great if you stayed at a company for years and years and years. When I first came to FWS they were going to retirement parties or transfer parties. People were transferring to different positions. I thought this was really crazy. I have never seen a place like this where people move around. When that opening came in Personnel, I thought maybe I had better make a move or they will think I'm pretty crazy too. That was the big thing. It

was only because everyone else was moving and I thought maybe I'd better do that. I wasn't young when I started at FWS, so I didn't know what the system was. Of course when I applied at the Personnel office I got the lateral move. It's crazy. I mean, I had never worked for anyone like that before. It was a puzzle to me but it all worked out in the end.

MS. NORTON: What did you think of the pay and benefits then when you were transferring from AAA?

MS. RUDE: I knew that I was going to have it better. I didn't have any benefits when I was at AAA. I just had a job. I knew I was a good worker. I always liked working and I could type. The only thing is, is that when I started working at FWS I wasn't real familiar with the computer. I was dinging around with one, but I wasn't real familiar with it like I was once I got in there.

MS. NORTON: Did they give you any training for the computer?

MS. RUDE: Oh yeah. Judy O'Donnell was the one who was helping me with it. I had a real horrible time with the one gal that I was working with. I guess I don't want to remember it because I hated her so much. I never hated anyone as much as I hated her. But she was Gay Inman's friend. If that gives you a clue. She worked in Refuges. Liz, that was her first name.

MS. NORTON: Her last name was Sporchech. [sp?]

MS. RUDE: Oh, I hated that woman. I am sorry, but she was terrible to me.

MS. NORTON: So, your working with the FWS didn't have any bad affect on your family?

MS. RUDE: Oh no.

MS. NORTON: And you left when you were eligible for retirement?

MS. RUDE: Yes, that's exactly right. In fact, I wanted to work until February 24th when I turned sixty-five but they were having early retirement. John Blankenship was the one who said, "Marge you're crazy not to take advantage of this!" Jim Dooley and I retired at the same time. He got the full benefit. I didn't because I hadn't been working at FWS at that time. They were the ones that convinced me that I ought to retire by the end of that year, which was two months shy of my sixty-fifth birthday. What could I say?

MS. NORTON: So when you worked in the Regional office you just worked regular office hours? This question is usually for people who work on Refuges and that type of thing.

MS. RUDE: Oh well, they have different hours don't they?

MS. NORTON: Well, sometimes they work from dawn to dusk.

MS. RUDE: No, I was on regular office hours except for a while there I was involved in that program where you could work so many hours and have a Friday off.

MS. NORTON: Were you ever involved in any special projects? Were your bosses involved and you had to work with them on any special projects?

MS. RUDE: Well, when we had any kind of a celebration I got involved there. But I really just did my regular duties mostly.

MS. NORTON: What were your regular duties?

MS. RUDE: I had to do travel vouchers. I did lots of correspondence. I was very good in punctuation and English and all of that. You know how sometimes a letter had to go from one department to another and then to another? Well, very seldom did I get a letter back. I was just good in English.

MS. NORTON: What sorts of jobs did you have before you came to work with FWS? I know you raised four children.

MS. RUDE: During that time, I was in sales. I sold Tupperware and then Sarah Coventry Jewelry. Before that, before I was married, I worked for a coal company in an office. I really enjoyed the office work. I liked it very much.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever socialize with any of the people that you worked with?

MS. RUDE: Whenever there was something going on with the FWS, yeah. But outside of that, not a whole lot.

MS. NORTON: Can you remember who all of your supervisors were?

MS. RUDE: Oh, all of them? Well, there was Jerry Schatskle, Rob Morrin; have you interviewed him?

MS. NORTON: No, not yet, he just retired a couple of years ago.

MS. RUDE: Yeah a couple of years ago. Then there was Mamie Parker.

MS. NORTON: Was there anybody who tried to help shape your career, or who tried to help keep you going with the FWS?

MS. RUDE: Well, Jerry Schatzkle was a tremendous help when I first started. I really had some bad days when I first started. And he saw that and I wanted to quit and go look for another job. He said, "No, no, just stay here, we're going to help you." And it was all because of Liz. He pulled me through it. And that's why I am forever grateful to Jerry Schatzkle.

MS. NORTON: It's unfortunate that he died as young as he did.

MS. RUDE: Yeah! What happened? Didn't he have a heart attack?

MS. NORTON: No, Shirley told me, but I can't remember right now what it was. It happened quite suddenly too.

MS. RUDE: It was very sudden. I wanted to go to his funeral but it was stormy. It was in the wintertime and I was hoping I could go with someone from FWS. He died after I retired. But I couldn't find anyone who was going to his funeral. I missed it and I feel real bad about that.

MS. NORTON: He was a great guy. Do you remember who was President when you started, or Secretary of the Interior or Director of FWS? It must have been Reagan.

MS. RUDE: Who took over for, well, that would have been, I was going to say Truman took over for Kennedy.

MS. NORTON: No. Harry Truman?

MS. RUDE: No, not Harry Truman.

MS. NORTON: Adali Stephenson?

MS. RUDE: No, he never made it in.

MS. NORTON: Well, who was Vice President when Kennedy got shot? Why can't I remember his name?

MS. RUDE: The guy from Texas. What's his name?

MS. NORTON: His wife's name is Rose and she still lives in Austin. Why can't I think of his name? Can you tell me what was the high point of your career with FWS?

MS. RUDE: After I got over this Liz thing, I was so thrilled to be with Fish and Wildlife; I don't know that I had a high point necessarily.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever have a low point?

MS. RUDE: Yeah, when I first started. That was because of Liz Sporshesh.

MS. NORTON: Do you want to explain anything about that?

MR. RUDE: Well, she was just mean to me; just plain mean to me. I wasn't worth anything. I was stupid.

MS. NORTON: Was she the one who was supposed to give you training?

MS. RUDE: She was my supervisor, so to speak, under Jerry Schatzkle. She was my immediate whatever. She was the one who would give me the work that I was supposed to do. But she, as far as I was concerned, she was not qualified to be in that position. And it wasn't until she moved out of Refuges and went to work with Harvey Nelson along with who else? Was it Margaret at the time?

MS. NORTON: It could have been Sharon Armenson? Or was she already retired?

MS. RUDE: It could have been her. It wasn't until she got out of Refuges that I was finally, you know; I knew I wasn't dumb, or stupid like she was telling all of the time. I didn't need that. And that's why I wanted to get out of there. Jerry Schatzkle says, "No, you just stay here." I stayed and I was glad.

MS. NORTON: You didn't ever have a dangerous or frightening experience did you?

MS. RUDE: With Liz?

MS. NORTON: No, just with FWS in general.

MS. RUDE: Yeah, I did have one. The only time I can remember that I was truly scared was when Rob Morrin fired one of the Biologists. We had to lock our doors. We couldn't leave the building. Because Rob was afraid that he could come back and threaten us. Nothing ever happened, but it did scare me when that happened; the fact that we could be threatened in the building there. I don't remember who the Biologist was. And I don't even remember what he did to get fired. But he was fired.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever have a humorous experience, any one more humorous than another?

MS. RUDE: Yes! Dorothe, did I ever! I'll never forget it! I was put on the committee to plan the Christmas for the office. You know how we go from one thing. I am really naïve with everything that's going on at the time. So anyway, we're in this room and we're planning our party for the office. These couple of guys came in to the room and they wondered how long we were going to be in the room. One of the fellows said, "We can leave any time you want us to." We didn't make reservations or anything to go into this room. And I said, "Well, do you have a reservation for this room?" You won't believe who was getting ready to come in... it was Harvey Nelson! I never lived that one down Dorothe! The rest of them on the committee just about died when I said, "Do you have a reservation for this room?"

MS. NORTON: As if Harvey would have needed one!

MS. RUDE: Right! Well, I didn't even know who he was! I had not been introduced to Harvey. Usually when someone would come in to the office as a new employee they took them around to the different departments and introduced everyone. Harvey was not in the office. He was out on a trip of some kind when this was being done and I never had a chance to meet him. I had no idea who he was! I just figured he was another employee around there. To me, that's the most humorous of all situations that I ever encountered.

MS. NORTON: Well, we're just about done here. I was wondered where you think the Service is heading in the next decade? How do you feel about the Service? Do you think that it's going to stay about where it is, or....?

MS. RUDE: Why shouldn't it stay where it is? Why shouldn't they get better? I wish they could come up with something as smart as the DNR did to tell you the truth. I am sure you are familiar with the Minnesota license plate with the Loon on it? Okay, I've always wanted one of those plates on my car. And finally, the kids and Roger got together at Christmas time and got me those license plates. But Roger told me that Tony [her son] ordered them for his wife. When they came, I was going to wrap that present for Sandy. Well, at Christmas time, I was handed this package that I had so beautifully wrapped, and everyone said, "No, that's for you Mom, that's for you!" I said, "No, I know I wrapped this present for Sandy!" Well, not knowing that they all pitched in together to get me that for Christmas. When the plates came, I have to tell you this, when the plates came the number on the plates are 2,2,3. My birthday is 2,2,4. I said to Roger, "Boy, I'll tell you one thing, if that was 2,2,4 there's no way Tony could have these plates! I'd do anything I could to get them for myself!" And here it was, a plate for me! A week ago, in the newspaper in both St. Paul and Minneapolis, they said that the DNR has made more money off of that license plate than any other plate they have ever had. I am glad to give them the thirty dollars extra that I need to give them to have that plate. I

wish the Fish and Wildlife Service could come up with something similar to that so they could get money for Wetlands or whatever. I am very much in to that since I worked for FWS. I knew nothing about that until I started working for FWS. I think it's a wonderful, wonderful thing. Whenever I see construction going up, for instance. I keep thinking, 'how much of this land are they going to use for the houses, and not let the birds have it?' I am very concerned about that. I don't know if someone at the FWS could come up with something like that where they could get a good moneymaker. What could it be? I don't know. I don't know what it would be, but I had a wonderful experience with my Loony plate that I have on my car. And I just love. DNR has sold more of those than any other license plate that they've had.

MS. NORTON: I read that also.

MS. RUDE: You have one too?

MS. NORTON: No, I said I had read that in the paper.

MS. RUDE: Whenever there is something in the paper or on television that has to do with FWS or the DNR, I really pay attention to what is going on. I just think it's super that we, thank God, we have the DNR and the FWS to protect the birds and animals. If we didn't have that, do you know where we would be? I mean, it would be terrible wouldn't it? I was very proud to work for the FWS. I didn't make any dent one way or another, but whatever I did, it was for a good cause. And I was really proud of that. And I am very proud to let people know that I worked for the FWS. I did get involved at FWS. I became the head person of the sweatshirts and T-shirts and all of those sorts of things. I would work into the night just getting all of the orders straightened out. I loved it. I took my vacation pay to do that because I knew there were certain times that I had to work in the daytime. I couldn't work at night; I had to work in the daytime. But I was real proud of being the head of the T-shirts and sweatshirts and the carryall bags that we had. I was taking everybody's orders. And especially when we opened up to other than just the employees here. I don't know how that all came about. Mary McCaule was the one that got that going. She was the one that really got it going.

MS. NORTON: She's my sister!

MS. RUDE: Yes, I know she's your sister. She's a doll, that girl!

MS. NORTON: She's wild sometimes; just wild and crazy, but she's a good gal.

MS. RUDE: See, she knew the gal who started the printing. She used to work at FWS; the girl who started the printing business. I don't remember her name but Mary knew her real well. That's how the thing actually got going, but I got very involved in it. I thought that was a ball.

MS. NORTON: The thing I am really happy about now, is that my sister is working in Law Enforcement, because that's where I spent my thirty years.

MS. RUDE: Oh, is that where she is now, in the Regional Office?

MS. NORTON: Yes, in the Regional Office with Judy. Judy is my replacement. Judy has Mary as an assistant, so that's great.

MS. RUDE: Oh, I see. Judy O'Donnell is the one that helped me on the computer then. Because the dinging around that I did on the computer, that was nothing compared to what I needed to know. I can't remember what kind of computers they were at that time. It wasn't what I was dinging around with, but then they went to the IBM. I loved my IBM typewriter. I wanted to take it with me when I quit, but.

MS. NORTON: Well, that's about the end of the tape! Do you have anybody you think we should interview who maybe isn't on the list?

MS. RUDE: Joan Scogseth was one.

MS. NORTON: I called her last week, but there was no answer.

MS. RUDE: She's gone a lot. She gets involved with her grandkids. And then, her mother is very sick. She might have been at her mother's house.

MS. NORTON: Well, I'm going to just keep moving along. I've got forty-eight still to go right here in the Twin Cities area; and about fifty-two in the State of Minnesota that I am working on during this period of no funding. But I'm not worried about the no funding thing. I think it's a very valuable resource that we have.

MS. RUDE: Dorothe, you know what, I should take your telephone number because if I think of the name of this Biologist I would like to call you. He would be a very good one to interview.

MS. NORTON: It will come to you all of a sudden when you least expect it, so I'll give you my number. I want to thank you for this time.

MS. RUDE: It was fun!!!